

In the claims:

1. (Currently amended) A cellular telephone network comprising peripheral branches and a central high-capacity data trunking region and using a synchronous data communication protocol and wherein said high-capacity data trunking region comprises a satellite interface for a satellite connection using a non-synchronous data communication protocol;

wherein said high capacity trunking region comprises a terrestrial high capacity trunking connection in parallel with said satellite connection such that said satellite connection is usable to back up said terrestrial connection.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 1 wherein said synchronous data communication protocol is the E1 data protocol and the asynchronous data communication protocol is the TCP/IP data communication protocol, and wherein said satellite interface comprises an E1 – TCP/IP converter.

4. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 3, wherein said high capacity trunking region comprises a terrestrial high capacity trunking connection in parallel with said satellite connection such that said terrestrial high capacity trunking connection is usable to back up said satellite connection.

5. (Currently amended)) A cellular telephone network according to claim-21, wherein the synchronous data communication protocol is the E1 protocol and the asynchronous data communication protocol is the TCP/IP protocol and wherein said interface comprises E1 – TCP/IP converters.

6. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 3, wherein said E1 - TCP/IP converter comprises a multiplexer for converting between the E1 signal and the TCP/IP signal.

7. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 1, wherein said satellite link is via geostationary orbit satellite.

8. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 5, wherein said E1 - TCP/IP converter comprises a multiplexer for converting between the E1 signal and the TCP/IP signal.

9. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 5, wherein said converter is operable to receive E1 signaling containing SS7 control signaling distributed therein at a predetermined data rate, said converter comprising

an extractor for extracting said SS7 signaling, and

a TCP/IP packet former for arranging said extracted signaling into TCP/IP packets.

10. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 7, wherein said converter comprises an encoder for encoding synchronization control data describing said E1 signal into headers of TCP/IP packets, thereby to enable subsequent synchronous reconstruction of said E1 signal.

11. (Original) A cellular telephone network according to claim 1, wherein at least one of said peripheral branches comprises a satellite link and an E1 - TCP/IP interface.

12. (Currently amended) A branch of a cellular telephone network based on a first synchronous data communication protocol, comprising interfaces to a satellite link using a second, asynchronous, data communication

protocol, wherein said interfaces comprise converters for converting data between said first data communication protocol and said second data communication protocol, wherein said interfaces comprising encoders for encoding synchronization control information of said first protocol when encoding data of said first protocol into said second protocol, thereby to enable reconstruction of a signal in said first protocol from data in said second protocol, which reconstructed data retains said synchronization.

13. (Original) A branch according to claim 12, wherein said interfaces are arranged to provide said satellite link as a parallel path to a terrestrial data link.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A branch ~~according to claim 12, of a~~ cellular telephone network based on a first synchronous data communication protocol, comprising interfaces to a satellite link using a second, asynchronous, data communication protocol, wherein said interfaces comprise converters for converting data between said first data communication protocol and said second data communication protocol, and comprising at least one base station connected to at least one mobile switching center, said at least one mobile switching center being associated with at least one location register, and wherein said satellite link is arranged to connect said at least one mobile switching center with said at least one location register.

16. (Currently amended) A branch ~~according to claim 12, of a~~ cellular telephone network based on a first synchronous data communication protocol, comprising interfaces to a satellite link using a second, asynchronous, data communication protocol, wherein said interfaces comprise converters for converting data between said first data communication protocol and said second data communication protocol, and wherein said interfaces comprising

decoders operable to decode synchronization control information from data arriving from said link, to reconstruct a synchronized telephony protocol data stream.

17. (Original) A branch according to claim 16, said interface further comprising a buffer controllable according to said decoded synchronization information to recreate time delay relationships of said telephony protocol data stream.

18. (Currently amended) A branch ~~according to claim 12, of a~~ cellular telephone network based on a first synchronous data communication protocol, comprising interfaces to a satellite link using a second, asynchronous, data communication protocol, wherein said interfaces comprise converters for converting data between said first data communication protocol and said second data communication protocol, and wherein said telephony protocol allowing non-data carrying time slots, and said interfaces comprising a non-data carrying time slot remover for removing said non-data carrying time slots during conversion into said asynchronous protocol and a time slot regenerator for regenerating non-data carrying time slots during reconstruction of said telephony protocol datastream.

19.-36. (Canceled)